



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-1000

SECNAVINST 5031.1A  
CHINFO

17 May 1989

SECNAV INSTRUCTION 5031.1A

From: Secretary of the Navy

Subj: SHIP NAMING, CHRISTENINGS AND COMMISSIONINGS

Encl: (1) Checklist of Responsibilities for Ship Naming,  
Christenings and Commissionings

1. Purpose. To issue instructions and responsibilities for ceremonies leading to ship christenings and commissionings for ships of the U.S. Navy.

2. Cancellation. SECNAVINST 5031.1.

3. Background. The two recognized public ceremonies for new ships of the U.S. Navy are christenings and commissionings. Christenings usually are coincident with the launching of the ship and apply to both United States Ships (USS) and some United States Naval Ships (USNS). For purposes of this instruction, the term "Christening" includes dedication, renaming or launching ceremonies. The term "sponsor" includes every person who christens a ship by breaking a bottle (usually champagne) across the ship's bow. Commissioning ceremonies apply to USS only. (R)

4. Action. Enclosure (1) provides specific directions for Navy planning in the events leading to a christening and commissioning. Close coordination is required for the Navy to present a professional appearance to the public. Of particular concern is the avoidance of changes to an announced ceremony date. Prior to advising the sponsor or speaker of the date, the Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command (COMNAVSEASYS COM) will determine with the shipbuilder that the date is achievable. If, after the sponsor and speaker have been advised of the ceremony date, it becomes necessary to change the date, COMNAVSEASYS COM will coordinate the date change with the Office of the Secretary of the Navy and Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Shipbuilding and Logistics) before the speaker and sponsor are notified of any changes.

5. Report and Form

a. The reporting requirement contained in enclosure (1) is exempt from reports control by SECNAVINST 5214.2B. (A)



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- A) b. Invitational Travel Order (NAVSO 4650/10), S/N  
0104-LF-903-6312, may be ordered from normal Navy supply  
channels per NAVSUP P-2002.

  
H. Lawrence Garrett, III  
Secretary of the Navy

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**CHECKLIST OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SHIP  
NAMING, CHRISTENINGS AND COMMISSIONINGS**

The procedures leading to the christening and commissioning of U.S. Navy ships are complex and require close coordination among the various agencies involved in these events. For the purposes of this checklist, the term christening also refers to a ship's launching. To ensure smooth completion of each ceremony, this checklist broadly defines some of each agency's responsibilities related to sponsors and speakers for christenings and commissionings.

1. **SHIP NAMING.** The Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09BH) will:

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a. For new construction, conversion and long-term charter ships, submit ship-naming nominations to the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV). Upon selection of the name by SECNAV, prepare a naming notice (SECNAV NOTICE 5030) for SECNAV's signature, giving a brief explanation or derivation of the name of the ship.

b. Provide to Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair (SUPSHIP) a photograph and biography or history of the ship's namesake, where applicable.

2. **SHIP SPONSORS.** The Chief of Information (CHINFO) is the appointed SECNAV agent responsible for receiving and consolidating sponsor nominations before final forwarding to SECNAV.

(R)

a. **The CNO (OP-09BH) will:**

(1) If the ship is named after an individual, submit to SECNAV via CHINFO, the name of the wife or widow, or nearest direct lineal female descendant to not more than three generations, for selection of a sponsor. If none, so state. If the ship is not named after an individual, submit other recommendation(s) to SECNAV via CHINFO for selection of a sponsor.

(2) Upon SECNAV selection of the sponsor, confirm the christening date with Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) and prepare a letter of invitation to the ship's sponsor for SECNAV's signature, unless otherwise directed by SECNAV's office. In the letter to the sponsor indicate the christening date and include a brief synopsis of the name of the ship. Provide copies to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Shipbuilding and Logistics) (ASN(S&L)); OLA; COMNAVSEASYS COM;

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Commander, Military Sealift Command (COMSC) (where applicable); CHINFO; and SUPSHIP.

(3) Upon acceptance of the SECNAV's invitation by the sponsor:

(a) Send a letter to the sponsor acknowledging her acceptance. Include the booklet Christening, Launching and Commissioning, and a copy of the naming notice. Provide copies of the letter to SECNAV, ASN(S&L), CNO, COMNAVSEASYSKOM, COMSC (as applicable), OLA, CHINFO, and SUPSHIP.

(b) Send a letter to SUPSHIP notifying of sponsor's acceptance. Provide the address of the ship's sponsor and other pertinent information. Provide copies to COMNAVSEASYSKOM, COMSC (where applicable), and CHINFO.

R) b. OLA will: Provide Congressional nominations for sponsors for each ship, as requested by CHINFO.

R) c. CHINFO will: Receive nominations from CNO (OP-09BH) and OLA, and consolidate them with other miscellaneous nominations as necessary for each ship. Forward a complete package of sponsor nominations for each ship to SECNAV.

### 3. SHIP CHRISTENINGS

a. COMNAVSEASYSKOM will:

(1) When christening date is approved, advise SUPSHIP and other responsible agencies. Advise the Secretary of the Navy and ASN(S&L) immediately of any potential date or location changes connected with the ship's christening. Coordinate date change with the Secretary of the Navy and ASN(S&L) before SUPSHIP notifies the sponsor or principal speaker. When a new date or change of location has been established, advise all concerned.

(2) Submit the Washington, D. C. area invitation list to SUPSHIP, based on submissions from CNO, OLA, CHINFO, MSC, and function as coordinator for late submissions.

R) (3) As requested quarterly by CHINFO, submit at least three nominations for principal speaker for each ship. This responsibility may be delegated to SUPSHIP and/or the prospective commanding officer (PCO). Speakers are invited by SECNAV and nominees are not to be advised that they have been nominated.

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(4) Provide accounting data to SUPSHIP for all Invitational Travel Order (ITO) requests.

b. COMSC will:

(1) Submit principal speaker nominations for each ship, as requested quarterly by CHINFO. Speakers are invited by SECNAV and nominees are not to be advised that they have been nominated. (R)

(2) Provide names of suggested guests for the invitation list to COMNAVSEASYSCOM.

(3) Provide the same assistance to sponsors and principal speakers of MSC ships, that sponsors and principal speakers of ships of the line are entitled to. ITO's are authorized under the same guidance discussed in paragraph 2c(3)(d) and 2c(5) of this instruction.

c. SUPSHIP will:

(1) Coordinate with the shipyard to determine a projected christening date for the ship. Submit this recommendation to COMNAVSEASYSCOM and COMSC for approval by message.

(2) Keep all concerned, especially COMNAVSEASYSCOM, CHINFO and COMSC, advised of any changes to ship's ceremony date or location.

(3) Upon notification of the sponsor's acceptance (NOTE: If there is a co-sponsor(s) or Matron of Honor they/she receive the same assistance as the ship's sponsor):

(a) Contact the sponsor and provide information and offer assistance.

(b) Keep the sponsor advised, after coordination with COMNAVSEASYSCOM, of any changes to the ship's ceremony date or location.

(c) Arrange transportation as required. For christenings, the shipyard usually provides all transportation support to and from the ceremony, as well as during the sponsor's visit.

(d) Approve Invitational Travel Orders (ITO's) for SECNAV if transportation to and from the ceremony location is required. Fill out and submit ITO. Obtain sponsor's social security number, mailing address and telephone number. Determine travel preferences to and from the ceremony. Obtain travel (R)

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tickets, if requested by sponsor, and mail them to the sponsor along with a copy of the ITO and travel claim forms. Advise the commanding officer, pre-commissioning unit (CO PRECOMUNIT) of flight information. Ensure the sponsor understands that all original receipts for expenses, with the completed travel forms, must be submitted with travel claim upon return from all official travel.

(e) Ensure lodging requirements during the sponsor's stay are arranged.

(f) Obtain from the sponsor a color photograph and biography for use in the christening program. Send copies to OLA, CHINFO, and CO PRECOMUNIT. If the sponsor does not have a suitable photo, ensure arrangements are made to have one taken, either at a Navy photo lab or a commercial facility.

(g) Ensure an itinerary is developed. Provide a copy to the sponsor, CHINFO, COMSC and CO PRECOMUNIT. Include in the itinerary the degree of involvement expected of the sponsor; e.g., making a speech, making a toast or presentation, and indicate the appropriate dress for the event.

(h) Advise the sponsor that a gift is not presented to the ship at the christening ceremony. Traditionally the sponsor presents a gift to the ship at the commissioning ceremony. (MSC ships are not commissioned). In addition, provide sponsor with a suggested date for forwarding guest's invitation list to SUPSHIP.

(i) Receive from CHINFO the undated letter signed by the CNO to the ship's sponsor. Date and present this letter to the sponsor at an appropriate ceremony, usually at the reception following the christening.

(4) When notified that a speaker has been invited, prepare for events and actions required subsequent to their acceptance.

(5) Upon notification that the speaker has accepted:

(a) Contact the speaker's office and render all assistance and information requested. Keep the speaker apprised of any changes that will affect the speaker's participation in the ceremony.

(b) Determine if any transportation and lodging requirements need to be arranged.

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(c) Ensure that the shipyard understands that if the principal speaker is a military or government official, the speaker does not receive shipyard funded transportation and lodging.

(d) If the speaker is a government official outside of the Department of Defense (DOD) (i.e. White House Staff, Cabinet Member, or with another executive department), the ITO will be requested as outlined in paragraph 2c(3)(d) of this instruction.

(e) If the speaker is an active duty flag officer, his/her office arranges and funds the travel to and from the ceremony and reimburses the speaker for lodging expenses.

(f) If the speaker is a Member of Congress, his/her staff will arrange the member's own transportation or coordinate travel needs with OLA for military transportation.

(g) If the speaker is a civilian, the shipyard usually provides transportation. If they do not provide transportation to and from the ceremony site an ITO should be requested under the same provisions as for a sponsor (paragraph 2c(3)(d)).

(h) Advise the speaker's office when the speaker's invitation list should be forwarded to SUPSHIP.

(i) Request from the speaker's office an advance copy of the speech, if possible. Copies of the speech should be available to the press on the day of the ceremony.

(6) Forward to the shipyard ceremony coordinator a master invitation list consisting of submissions from COMNAVSEASYSCOM, the sponsor, the speaker, and the CO PRECOMUNIT. Late submissions will be called in by COMNAVSEASYSCOM, to SUPSHIP, for inclusion.

(7) Forward a copy of the shipyard's master invitation list for the event within three weeks of the scheduled ceremony, to COMNAVSEASYSCOM, COMSC, OLA, CHINFO, and CO PRECOMUNIT for further distribution as required. Notify OLA by letter or telephone, not later than one week prior to the event, of congressional attendance or lack thereof.

(8) Provide a copy of this checklist to the CO PRECOMUNIT.

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d. CHINFO will:

(1) On notification of sponsor acceptance (NOTE: if there is a co-sponsor or Matron of Honor they receive the same assistance as the ship's sponsor):

(a) Send a message to SECNAV, CNO, COMNAVSEASYSKOM, COMSC, OLA, SUPSHIP and the CO PRECOMUNIT announcing the acceptance.

(b) Within 60 days of the ceremony, draft a letter to the sponsor to be signed by CNO. Not less than three weeks before the scheduled ceremony forward the sponsor letter, undated and unfolded, to SUPSHIP for presentation at an appropriate time during the scheduled events.

(2) Submit to SECNAV's office a list of principal speaker nominations, at the beginning of each calendar quarter, for all ships to be launched in the next quarter. The SECNAV Nomination List is compiled from nominations (3 each) received from CNO, OLA, COMNAVSEASYSKOM, and COMSC. Prospective Commanding Officers (PCO) and shipyards are welcome to submit nominations, but they should be submitted via SUPSHIP and COMNAVSEASYSKOM or COMSC.

(3) When SECNAV indicates a preference for the principal speaker, unless otherwise directed, coordinate the following:

(a) When the speaker is a Member of Congress, OLA will extend an informal invitation by telephone on behalf of the SECNAV.

(b) When the speaker is a member of the White House Staff or Cabinet, SECNAV's office will extend an informal invitation by telephone.

(c) When the speaker is a flag officer, or someone other than the previous categories mentioned, CHINFO will extend an informal invitation by telephone on behalf of the SECNAV.

(4) When notified of informal acceptance by the speaker of SECNAV's invitation, record date, name of invitee and follow-on action, and prepare a letter of invitation for SECNAV's signature, unless otherwise directed. Coordinate with office of invitee to ensure receipt of invitation.

(5) Upon notification of acceptance of invitation by the speaker:



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(a) Send a message announcing the acceptance to SUPSHIP, info SECNAV, CNO, COMNAVSEASYSKOM, COMSC, CO PRECOMUNIT, and Navy Offices of Information.

(b) Prepare a letter of acknowledgement of acceptance for SECNAV's signature to the speaker, as directed by SECNAV's office.

(c) Forward to the principal speaker, unless otherwise directed, a speaker's package consisting of the ship's naming notice, the booklet Christening, Launching, and Commissioning, a copy of the Ships and Submarines Section from the 8th Edition of the Navy Fact File, and other background information that is pertinent to the ship or ceremony.

(6) Provide, if desired, names of suggested guests for the invitation list to COMNAVSEASYSKOM.

e. OLA will:

(1) Submit Congressional nominations for principal speakers for each ship, as requested by CHINFO.

(2) Provide names of suggested guests for invitation list to COMNAVSEASYSKOM.

(3) Extend invitation on behalf of SECNAV, as directed, when principal speaker to be invited is a Member of Congress.

(4) Arrange transportation to the christening ceremony for Congressional Members invited as principal speakers, participants, or as platform guests.

f. CO PRECOMUNIT, or Fleet Introduction Team (FIT) where appropriate, will:

(1) Forward a copy of the PCO's biography and official photograph to CHINFO, when a PCO has been identified.

(2) Provide a point-of-contact, mailing address, and telephone number to CHINFO.

(3) Coordinate with SUPSHIP transportation and lodging requirements for the principal speaker and the ship's sponsor. Assist in developing their itinerary.

(4) Submit names of suggested guests for the invitation list to SUPSHIP.

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3. SHIP COMMISSIONINGS

a. COMNAVSEASYSCOM will:

(1) After obtaining the recommendation for commissioning time and place from SUPSHIP, send message to CNO recommending time and place for commissioning and keep all concerned informed of any changes. Coordinate any change of the approved commissioning time and place with ASN (S&L) before notification of the ship's sponsor or principal speaker.

(2) Submit the Washington D. C. area invitation list to the CO PRECOMUNIT based on submissions from CNO, OLA, CHINFO, and also function as coordinator for late submissions.

R) (3) As requested quarterly by CHINFO, submit at least three nominations for principal speaker for each ship. This responsibility may be delegated to SUPSHIP and/or the PCO. Speakers are invited by SECNAV and nominees are not to be advised that they have been nominated.

(4) Provide accounting data to PCO/PRECOMUNIT for all ITO requests.

(5) COMNAVSEASYS COM will attend commissioning or send congratulatory message.

b. SUPSHIP will:

(1) Coordinate with ship's PCO and recommend a commissioning date and location to NAVSEA for approval.

(2) Provide a copy of this checklist to the PRECOMUNIT.

(3) Coordinate with the ship's PCO, who traditionally extends an invitation to the ship's sponsor to attend the commissioning ceremony and hosts sponsor during her stay, to ensure the sponsor is contacted and provided information and assistance.

(4) Coordinate with the PCO, who hosts the principal speaker, to ensure the speaker's office is contacted and provided information and assistance.

(5) Submit invitation list recommendations to the ship's PCO.

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(6) Forward a copy to the shipyard of the most recent master invitation list received from CO PRECOMUNIT.

c. CO PRECOMUNIT will:

(1) Forward a copy of the ship's PCO biography and official photograph to CHINFO when a PCO has been identified.

(2) Provide CHINFO with a point of contact, mailing address, and telephone number.

(3) Coordinate with the SUPSHIP/shipyard to determine a recommended commissioning date for the ship. Submit this recommendation to COMNAVSEASCOM for approval. Keep all concerned advised, including the ship's sponsor and principal speaker (if one has accepted), of commissioning date and location, and any changes.

(4) The ship's PCO traditionally extends an invitation to the ship's sponsor to attend the commissioning ceremony and hosts sponsor during her stay. (NOTE: If there is a co-sponsor(s) or Matron of Honor, they receive the same assistance as the ship's sponsor).

(a) Determine transportation requirements and ensure they are arranged for the sponsor.

(b) Commissioning ceremonies are usually planned and executed by the PCO. Funds may not be provided by the shipyard. Arrangements should be made accordingly.

(c) Approve ITO's for SECNAV if transportation to and from the ceremony location is required. Fill out and submit ITO. Obtain sponsor's social security number, mailing address and telephone number. Determine travel preferences to and from the ceremony. Obtain travel tickets, if requested by sponsor, and mail them to the sponsor along with a copy of the ITO and travel claim forms. Ensure the sponsor understands that all original receipts for expenses, with the completed travel forms, must be submitted with travel claim upon return from all official travel. (R

(d) If needed, obtain from the sponsor a color photograph and biography for use in the commissioning program. If the sponsor does not have a suitable photograph, ensure arrangements are made to have one taken, either at a Navy photo lab or a commercial facility.

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(e) Ensure an itinerary is developed. Provide a copy to the sponsor, OLA, CHINFO and SUPSHIP. Include in the itinerary the degree of involvement expected of the sponsor; e.g. make a speech, make a toast, or presentation. Indicate the appropriate dress for the various events.

(f) Advise the sponsor that a gift is traditionally presented to the ship at the commissioning ceremony. Provide sponsor with a suggested date for forwarding sponsor's invitation list to CO PRECOMUNIT.

(5) Upon notification of SECNAV's selection of a principal speaker, prepare for events and actions required subsequent to his/her acceptance.

(6) Upon notification that a speaker has accepted:

(a) Contact the speaker's office and render all assistance and information requested. Keep the speaker apprised of any changes which will affect his/her participation in the ceremony.

(b) Determine any transportation and lodging support required for the principal speaker.

(c) Coordinate to ensure that the shipyard understands that if the principal speaker is military or government official he does not receive shipyard funded transportation and lodging.

(d) If the speaker is an active duty flag officer, his/her office arranges the travel to and from the ceremony.

(e) If the speaker is a Member of Congress, his/her staff will usually arrange the Member's own transportation or coordinate travel needs with OLA for military transportation.

(f) If the speaker is a civilian, the CO PRECOMUNIT will determine if government transportation is required. If needed, an ITO should be requested under the same guidance as that for a sponsor needing transportation to and from the ceremony site.

(g) If the speaker is a government official outside of DOD (i.e. White House Staff, Cabinet Member, or with another executive department), the ITO will be requested as outlined in paragraph 3c(4)(c) of this instruction.

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(h) Advise the speaker's office when the speaker's invitation list should be forwarded to CO PRECOMUNIT.

(i) Request from the speaker's office an advance copy of the speech, if possible. Copies of the speech should be available to the press on the day of the ceremony.

(7) Maintain a master invitation list consisting of submissions from CNO, COMNAVSEASYSKOM, the sponsor, the principal speaker, and SUPSHIP. Other submissions may be called in or mailed in to PRECOMUNIT for inclusion. CO PRECOMUNIT is responsible for commissioning ceremony invitations. Within three weeks of the scheduled ceremony provide a copy of the most recent master invitation list to CNO, COMNAVSEASYSKOM, OLA, SUPSHIP and CHINFO for further distribution as required.

(8) Coordinate with SUPSHIP itinerary, transportation and lodging requirements for the principal speaker and the ship's sponsor.

d. CHINFO will:

(1) Submit to SECNAV's office a list of principal speaker nominations, at the beginning of each calendar quarter, for all ships to be commissioned in the next quarter. Follow the same guidance provided for ship's christenings.

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(2) Provide, if desired, names of suggested guests for the invitation list to COMNAVSEASYSKOM.

e. OLA will:

(1) As requested by CHINFO, submit Congressional nominations for principal speakers for each ship.

(2) Provide names of suggested guests for invitation list to COMNAVSEASYSKOM.

(3) Extend invitation on behalf of the SECNAV, as directed, when principal speaker to be invited is a Member of Congress.

(4) Arrange for transportation to the commissioning ceremony for Congressional Members invited as principal speakers, participants, or as platform guests.